

ALMOST ONE THIRD OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION LIVES IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

TWENTY THINGS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES



- 1** The first Commonwealth Games (then known as the British Empire Games) were held in 1930 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Bobby Robinson, a major influence within Athletics in Canada at the time, finally implemented what had been talked about amongst Commonwealth nations for over 30 years.
- 2** Eleven nations with a total of 400 athletes participated in the first Commonwealth Games.
- 3** The Games have been conducted every four years except for 1942 and 1946, due to World War II.
- 4** The Commonwealth is a unique family of developed and developing nations, a voluntary association of independent sovereign states spread over every continent and ocean. From Africa to Asia, from pacific shores to the Caribbean, the Commonwealth's 1.7 billion people make up almost one third of the world's population.
- 5** From 1930 to 1950 the Games were known as the British Empire Games, then the British Empire and Commonwealth Games until 1962. From 1966 to 1974 they took on the title of British Commonwealth Games and from 1978 onwards they have been known as simply the Commonwealth Games.
- 6** The Commonwealth Games is open to eligible competitors of the Commonwealth Games Association of all Commonwealth nations, colonies and dependent or associated territories of a Commonwealth nation.
- 7** At the Commonwealth Games Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey all compete in the Games as separate nations.
- 8** The Queen is the Head of the Commonwealth and patron of the Commonwealth Games Federation; the Queen's Baton Relay is one of the great traditions of the Commonwealth Games. It signifies a call to the Commonwealth athletes to come together to celebrate the Games. It also carries the Queen's message to be read at the opening of the Games.
- 9** Commonwealth nations include some of the largest populations on earth - such as India, with a population of 1.01 billion - and some of the world's smallest populations such as St Helena, a 308 sq km Island in the Atlantic, with a population of 7000.

10 Participating nations

Africa

Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia

Americas

Belize, Bermuda, Canada, Falkland Islands, Guyana, St Helena

Asia

Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka

Caribbean

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands

Europe

England, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales

Oceania

Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

11 Australia is the 12th most populated Commonwealth nation. India (1.01 billion), Pakistan (146 million), Bangladesh (137 million), Nigeria (114 million) and England (49 million) are the five largest nations.

12 Australia leads the total medal tally with 1683 medals, from England on 1582 and Canada on 1228. When it comes to gold medals, Australia has collected 646, England 542 and Canada 387.

13 At the first Games in Hamilton, Canada, England won 61 medals compared to Australia's eight. The last time the Games were held in Australia, in Brisbane in 1982, England won more medals, 108 to 107, but Australia won more gold, 39 to 38.

14 At the Commonwealth and Olympic Games, Aquatics is classed as the sport and Diving, Swimming and Synchronised Swimming are all disciplines. The same applies to Cycling, with disciplines of Track, Road and Mountain Bike. Gymnastics – Artistic and Rhythmic, and Shooting – Clay Target, Full Bore, Small Bore and Pistol also have disciplines within their sports.

15 The mission statement for the Games was to be “merrier and less stern than the Olympic Games”. This was evidenced in 1930 in the early rounds of the men’s 100m where New Zealand’s Allan Elliott false started twice and was disqualified. The crowd reacted with such noise that the starter was unable to re-start the race until Elliott was allowed back in. Twenty years later in 1950 in Auckland the New Zealanders returned the favour, allowing Canadian sprinter Donald Petrie, who also false started twice, back into the competition.

16 In 1938 athletes from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland took four months to travel to the Empire Games in Sydney – three months of which were spent on a boat. Twice a week they would stop at a port to allow training.

17 Dave Prowse, a Bristol weightlifter, represented England in Perth in 1962. He later became Darth Vader in Star Wars and subsequent sequels.

18 One of the smallest nations captured one of the most prized medals in Manchester when Kim Collins sprinted to victory in the 100m. St Kitts and Nevis (population 39,000) joined the Commonwealth in 1983 and has attended four Commonwealth Games since the 1990 Games held in Auckland, New Zealand.

19 Susie O’Neill and Ian Thorpe share the record for winning the most gold medals. Susie won six in Kuala Lumpur. Ian matched the feat in Manchester in 2002.

20 Australia’s oldest gold medallist is Dorothy Roache, who was 61 years and 10 months when she won a gold medal in the Women’s Four Lawn Bowls in Auckland in 1990. The youngest is Jenny Turrell, who was 13 years and eight months when she won the 400m freestyle in Christchurch in 1974.